

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 125: Text Studies for Production

Fall – Tues, Thurs – 9:30 - 10:50 62640D

Location: GFS 104

Instructor: Paula Cizmar

Office: JEF 201, 950 W. Jefferson, Los Angeles 90089

Office Hours: (Available: Tues 1-3 pm ; Wed 10 am – 12 pm; Wed 1 – 3 pm; Thurs 1-4 pm; please note that office hours are by appointment only; contact me via email or phone, at least 24 hours in advance. For appointments outside these hours, I am available by videoconference on SKYPE or Google Hangout.

Contact Info: cizmar@usc.edu; 323.376.1216 mobile; 213.821.2090 office; www.paulacizmar.com

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services

<http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts IT – Mr. Prakash Shirke, Contact Info: shirke@usc.edu; 213.740.1288. MCC

Teaching Assistant:

Contact Info:

Catalogue Description

This course encourages students to take initiative and develop independent, analytical thinking about dramatic texts through close and careful reading. This course will focus on learning techniques for beginning with a script and transforming it into a stage production. Using a range of plays as source material we will explore how to take a play apart to understand how it is put together and works as theatre. We will practice the dramaturgical methodologies actors, directors, and designers need to employ prior to rehearsal to understand the bones of a dramatic text and flesh it out into a production score. By the time we conclude, students should feel confident that they can approach any dramatic text they encounter and know how to begin exploring it on its own terms.

Course Overview

The course is structured as a seminar in which student discussion and analysis are primary.

- Students are encouraged to engage not only with peers in their respective sections but also with those in other sections.
- The course is taught by faculty from various areas within SDA, who meet to share teaching strategies and resources.
- The reading list comprises five plays, three of which are common to all sections of THTR 125 and two texts that vary per section.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to equip students with basic analytical tools and interpretive perspectives that will enhance learning in all future SDA courses including acting, dramatic writing, directing, and tech/design. Goals are:

- To offer students an in-depth study of how dramatic texts work.
- To develop their ability to discover how the author provides them with the material they need to create a successful production

- To hone their ability to read and analyze these dramatic works deeply and to see them as dramatic scores.
- To improve their mindfulness of the collaborative relationships between actor, script, theatre event, and the audience as expressed in a dramatic text.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- *Awake and Sing* by Clifford Odets
- *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare
- *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker
- *Water by the Spoonful* by Quiara Alegría Hudes
- *Father Comes Home from the Wars* by Suzan-Lori Parks

Note: Supplementary materials will be provided online via Blackboard.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Assignment	% of Grade
1. Written Assignment 1	15%
2. Midterm Assignment	20%
3. Written Assignment 2	20%
4. Final	20%
5. In class exercises	10%
6. Participation	15%
TOTAL:	100%

Grading Scale for SDA: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Grading Breakdown

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: D+ (1.3) = 69 – 66; D = 65-64 (1); D = 63 - 60 (0.7) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

- “Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight, as demonstrated by their work; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material and has done the work well; “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.
- When the average falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been good, and will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING:

- There shall be three graded assignments and a final examination as scheduled by USC.
- Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.
- There shall be no unexcused absences.
- **No late assignments** shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1 8/21-8/25	Class 1	INTRODUCTION
AMERICAN CLASSIC – AWAKE AND SING		
	Class 2	Begin <i>Awake and Sing</i>
WEEK 2 8/28-9/1	Class 3	Background: <i>Awake and Sing</i> , Odets, and the Group Theatre; Assign Written Assignment 1
	Class 4	Character: <i>Awake and Sing</i>
WEEK 3 9/4-9/8	Class 5	Setting: <i>Awake and Sing</i>
	Class 6	Exploring Scenes and the Importance of Research: <i>Awake and Sing</i>
	9/8	<i>Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund.</i>
WEEK 4 9/11-9/15	Class 7	Exploring Scenes: <i>Awake and Sing</i> ; Written Assignment 1 due
	Class 8	Finish <i>Awake and Sing</i>
SHAKESPEARE – TWELFTH NIGHT		
WEEK 5 9/18-9/22	Class 9	Working with the Text: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
	Class 10	Delivering the Lines & Shakespeare's Language: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
WEEK 6 9/25-9/29	Class 11	Character: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
	Class 12	Setting: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
WEEK 7 10/2-10/6	Class 13	Exploring Scenes: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD		
	Class 14	Intro: <i>Our Country's Good</i> ; MIDTERM
WEEK 8 10/9-10/13	Class 15	Working with the Text: <i>Our Country's Good</i> ; Assign Written Assignment 2
	Class 16	The Three Worlds of <i>Our Country's Good</i>
WEEK 9 10/16-10/20	Class 17	Character and Setting: <i>Our Country's Good</i>
	Class 18	Exploring Scenes: <i>Our Country's Good</i>
WATER BY THE SPOONFUL		
WEEK 10 10/23-10/27	Class 19	Begin: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
	Class 20	Working with the Text - Dissonance: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
WEEK 11 10/30-11/3	Class 21	Character and Casting: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
	Class 22	Theatricality: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> ; Written Assignment 2 due
WEEK 12 11/6-11/10	Class 23	Exploring Scenes: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i>
FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS		
	Class 24	Intro: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
	11/10	<i>Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W"</i>
WEEK 13 11/13-11/17	Class 25	Epic Theatricality: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
	Class 26	Poetry and Character: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
WEEK 14 11/20-11/24	Class 27	Themes – Slavery, War, Odyssey: <i>Father Comes Home...</i>
	NO CLASS	11/23 THANKSGIVING
WEEK 15 11/27-12/1	Class 28	Exploring Scenes: <i>Father Comes Home from the Wars</i>
	Class 29	Final review. Class conclusions.

Assignments and Deadlines:

Assignment 1: Close reading of an extract (to be indicated by instructor) of *Awake and Sing*. Due Date: Tuesday 9/12. (750 words)

Midterm: Close reading of an extract (to be indicated by instructor) of *Twelfth Night*. Due Date: Thursday 10/5. (750 words)

Assignment 2: Script coverage. Provide “coverage” for Play 3 as if you were on the play selection committee of a theatre, play development conference, or grants agency, using the form supplied. Due Date: Thursday 11/3 (Word count as indicated on form provided.)

Final: A 1500-word essay in response to a topic that you select from options provided by the instructor. Due Date: Thursday 12/7 @ Noon.

In-class exercises: For each unit you will be told in advance which exercises will contribute to this element of your grade.

Final Examination Date: Thursday 12/7 11 am – 1 pm

Please note this is the final examination date as scheduled by the University. This information can be found online at USC’s site for the Schedule of Classes.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.